

REMARKS

Applicant respectfully requests reconsideration of the present application in view of the foregoing amendments and in view of the reasons that follow.

Claims 1-101, 103, 106-107 were previously cancelled.

Claims 105, 108, 112, 113, 116, 125, 126, 129, 133, 134, 139, 140, 142-144, and 154-170 are requested to be cancelled.

Claims 102, 104, 114, 115, 117, 119, 121, 123, 127, 128, 135, 136, 137 are currently being amended.

Claims 109-111, 124, 132, 138, 141, 146 are currently withdrawn/currently amended.

Claims 145, 147, 148, 149, 151 and 152 are withdrawn.

Claims 171-185 are being added.

After amending the claims as set forth above, Claims 102, 104, 109-111, 114, 115, 117-124, 127, 128, 130-132, 135-138, 141, 145-153, and 171-185 (49 claims) are now pending in this application, of which Claims 102, 121, 128, and 150 are independent claims.

Claims 102, 104, 114, 115, 117-123, 127, 128, 130-131, 135-137, 150, 153, and 171-185 are subject to examination.

Claim Objections

Claims 102, 162, and 169 were objected to in paragraph 2 of the Office Action. Claims 162 and 169 were cancelled. Claim 102 was amended as suggested in the Office Action.

Amendments to the Claims

Claim 128 was amended to include the subject matter of Claim 136, which was indicated as allowable. Claims 102 and 121 were also amended similar to (although not the same as) Claim 128.

Other claims were amended to reflect the amendments to Claims 102, 121, and 128.

Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 136 was objected to as being dependent on a rejected base claim. Claim 128 (from which Claim 136 depended) has been amended to include the elements of Claim 136.

Claims 130-132, 135, 137, 138, 141, 145-149, and 171-175 depend from Claim 128 and are believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 132, 138, 141, and 145-149 were previously withdrawn, but are requested to be reinstated since they depend from an allowable base claim.

Claims 150 and 153 were allowed.

Claims 151 and 152 depend from Claim 150 and are believed to be in condition for allowance. Claims 151 and 152 were previously withdrawn, but are requested to be reinstated since they depend from an allowable base claim.

Claims 102 and 121 have been amended to include features of Claim 136 which was indicated as allowable. These claims are believed to be allowable for reasons similar to those expressed for Claim 136.

Claims 104, 109-111, 114, 115, 117-120, and 176-180 depend from Claim 102. Claims 109-111 were previously withdrawn, but are requested to be reinstated since they are believed to depend from an allowable base claim.

Claims 122-124, 127, and 181-185 depend from Claim 121. Claim 124 was previously withdrawn, but is requested to be reinstated since it is believed to depend from an allowable base claim.

Arguments in Previous Response

In paragraph 16 of the Office Action, it is indicated that Applicants' arguments made in its previous responses were moot in view of the new grounds of rejection. Since it appears that these arguments have not been relied on by the Patent Office, Applicants withdraw their

previous arguments and support for those arguments unless otherwise indicated by the Patent Office.

Conclusion

Applicant believes that the present application is now in condition for allowance. Favorable reconsideration of the application as amended is respectfully requested.

The Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned by telephone if it is felt that a telephone interview would advance the prosecution of the present application.

The Commissioner is hereby authorized to charge any additional fees which may be required regarding this application under 37 C.F.R. §§ 1.16-1.17, or credit any overpayment, to Deposit Account No. 06-1447. Should no proper payment be enclosed herewith, as by a check or credit card payment form being in the wrong amount, unsigned, post-dated, otherwise improper or informal or even entirely missing, the Commissioner is authorized to charge the unpaid amount to Deposit Account No. 06-1447. If any extensions of time are needed for timely acceptance of papers submitted herewith, Applicant hereby petitions for such extension under 37 C.F.R. §1.136 and authorizes payment of any such extensions fees to Deposit Account No. 06-1447.

Respectfully submitted,

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By 

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For convenience, below is a list of claims (in clean form) that are arranged by the claim from which they depend, rather than by numerical order.

102. (Currently Amended) A contact toaster for toasting bread products comprising:

a heating zone comprising a heating element configured to contact and toast a second face of bread products; and

a first belt configured to move the bread product through the heating zone, the belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face;

a coating disposed over the first face;

a first plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material, the first plurality of ribs being transverse to a longitudinal direction of the first belt and being configured to impart lateral force to objects carried by the first belt; and

a second plurality of ribs raised above the second face of the reinforcement material, the second plurality of ribs comprising a plurality of straight ribs transverse to a longitudinal direction of the first belt;

wherein a pattern of the first plurality of ribs is different than a pattern of the second plurality of ribs; and

wherein the first belt is configured to wrap around a second belt such that a plurality of the second plurality of ribs contact the second belt;

wherein the first belt is configured to withstand the temperatures of the heating zone; and

wherein the first belt contacts a first face of bread products.

104. (Currently Amended) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, further comprising the second belt which comprises at least one of a chain belt, wire belt, and metal belt, wherein the first belt is configured to be coupled to the second belt.

109. (Currently Amended) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein ribs raised above one face are straight and parallel to each other, and ribs raised above another face are arranged in a repeating pattern that is at least one of undulating and sinusoidal.
110. (Currently Amended) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the first plurality of ribs have a density of at least one rib per linear foot of the first belt.
111. (Currently Amended) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the first plurality of ribs form a pattern of undulating ribs.
114. (Currently Amended) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein at least one of the first plurality of ribs has a height of at least about 0.020 inches.
115. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the first belt has a structure that is continuous.
117. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the second belt has an open structure.
118. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the apparatus is a vertically oriented toasting machine.
119. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the first belt is configured to move food products through the heating zone such that food products will slide along a stationary toasting surface such that the food product is toasted as it slides.
120. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the apparatus is configured to toast items in a continuous toasting operation.
176. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein at least one of the first plurality of ribs and the second plurality of ribs comprise a plurality of ribs spaced apart by about 1.5 inches.
177. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein ribs of the second plurality of ribs are spaced apart differently than ribs of the first plurality of ribs.

178. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the first belt is configured such that the first belt helps retain heat in buns and warm them to serving temperature.

179. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, wherein the contact toaster is configured such that the first belt can be used to compress a bun against the toasting surface.

180. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 102, further comprising

a third belt, the third belt comprising;

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face,

a plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material of the third belt, and

at least one rib raised above the second face of the reinforcement material of the third belt;

wherein the contact toaster is configured to be capable of simultaneously toasting a first food product in contact with the first belt and a second food product in contact with a third belt.

121. (Currently Amended) A contact toaster for toasting bread products comprising:

a heating zone comprising a heating element configured to contact and toast a second face of bread products; and

a first belt configured to move the bread product through the heating zone, the first belt arranged such that the first belt contacts a first face of bread products, the first belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face;

a material that is at least one of coated and laminated over the first face of the reinforcement material;

a first plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material, the first plurality of ribs being transverse to a longitudinal direction of the first belt and being configured to impart lateral force to objects carried by the first belt; and

a second plurality of ribs above the second face of the reinforcement material, the second plurality of ribs comprising a plurality of straight ribs transverse to a longitudinal direction of the first belt;

wherein a pattern of the first plurality of ribs is different than a pattern of the second plurality of ribs; and

wherein the first belt is configured to wrap around a second belt such that a plurality of the second plurality of ribs contact the second belt.

122. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein the apparatus is a vertically oriented toasting machine.

123. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein the first belt is configured to move food products through the heating zone such that food products will slide along a stationary toasting surface such that the food product is toasted as it slides.

124. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein ribs raised above one face of the first belt are straight and parallel to each other, and ribs raised above another face of the belt are arranged in a repeating pattern that is at least one of undulating and sinusoidal.

127. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein the first plurality of ribs have a height of at least about 0.020 inches.

181. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein at least one of the first plurality of ribs and the second plurality of ribs comprise a plurality of ribs spaced apart by about 1.5 inches.

182. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein ribs of the second plurality of ribs are spaced apart differently than ribs of the first plurality of ribs.

183. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein the first belt is configured such that the first belt helps retain heat in buns and warm them to serving temperature.

184. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, wherein the contact toaster is configured such that the first belt can be used to compress a bun against the toasting surface.

185. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 121, further comprising

a third belt, the third belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face,

a plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material of the third belt, and

at least one rib raised above the second face of the reinforcement material of the third belt;

wherein the contact toaster is configured to be capable of simultaneously toasting a first food product in contact with the first belt and a second food product in contact with a third belt.

128. (Currently Amended) A contact toaster for toasting bread products comprising:

a toasting surface configured to toast a first face of bread products; and

a first belt configured to be arranged to contact a second face of bread products and move the bread products so that they slide along the toasting surface and toast as they slide, the first belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face;

a material that is at least one of coated and laminated over the first face of the reinforcement material; and

a first plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material, the first plurality of ribs being transverse to a longitudinal direction

of the first belt and being configured to impart lateral force to objects carried by the first belt;

a second plurality of ribs above the second face of the reinforcement material, the second plurality of ribs comprising a plurality of straight ribs transverse to a longitudinal direction of the first belt;

wherein a pattern of the first plurality of ribs is different than a pattern of the second plurality of ribs; and

wherein the first belt is configured to wrap around a second belt such that a plurality of the second plurality of ribs contact the second belt.

130. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the apparatus is a vertically oriented toasting machine.

131. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the apparatus is configured to toast buns.

132. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein ribs raised above one face of the belt are straight and parallel to each other, and ribs raised above another face of the belt are arranged in a repeating pattern that is at least one of undulating and sinusoidal.

135. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein at least one of the first plurality of ribs has a height of at least about 0.020 inches.

137. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the belt is a first belt, and comprises a second plurality of flights ribs above the second face of the reinforcement material; and further comprising the second belt arranged such that the first belt wraps around the second belt, the second face of the first belt facing the second belt.

138. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the first plurality of ribs are formed from beads having a diameter of about one thirty-second of an inch to about one half of an inch.

141. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the first plurality of ribs comprise wavy ribs.

145. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 141, wherein the wavy ribs are discontinuous.

146. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 141, wherein at least one of the wavy ribs has a height of at least about 0.02 inches.

147. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 141, wherein the contact toaster is a vertically oriented toasting machine.

148. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 141, wherein the wavy ribs comprise sinusoidal ribs.

149. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 141, wherein the first belt comprises lacings and a flap.

171. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein at least one of the first plurality of ribs and the second plurality of ribs comprise a plurality of ribs spaced apart by about 1.5 inches.

172. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein ribs of the second plurality of ribs are spaced apart differently than ribs of the first plurality of ribs.

173. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the first belt is configured such that the first belt helps retain heat in buns and warm them to serving temperature.

174. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, wherein the contact toaster is configured such that the first belt can be used to compress a bun against the toasting surface.

175. (New) The contact toaster for toasting bread products of claim 128, further comprising

a third belt, the third belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face,

a plurality of ribs raised above the first face of the reinforcement material of the third belt, and

at least one rib raised above the second face of the reinforcement material of the third belt;

wherein the contact toaster is configured to be capable of simultaneously toasting a first food product in contact with the first belt and a second food product in contact with a third belt.

150. (Previously Presented) A contact toaster for bread products comprising:

a heating element configured to toast food products;

a first belt comprising at least one of a link-type belt and a chain belt;

a first rotating sprocket coupled to the first belt and configured to drive the first belt;

and

a second belt configured to move food products, the second belt comprising,

a reinforcement material having a first face and a second face, the reinforcement material comprising at least one of fiberglass, nylon, polyester, aramid, polyethylene, polyolefin, polyimide, and films thereof;

at least one of a silicone rubber, a urethane rubber, and a fluoropolymer above the first face of the reinforcement material;

at least one of a silicone rubber, a urethane rubber, and a fluoropolymer above the second face of the reinforcement material;

a first plurality of ribs above the first face of the reinforcement material; and

a second plurality of ribs above the second face of the reinforcement material;

wherein the contact toaster is arranged such that,

the first rotating sprocket drives the first belt and the first belt drives the second belt;

the second belt is wrapped around the first belt such that the second face of the second belt faces the first belt;

the first face of the second belt contacts a first face of food products and the heating element toasts a second face of food products; and

food products are moved such that food products will slide along a stationary toasting surface and toast as they slide; and

wherein a pattern of the first plurality of ribs of the second belt is different than a pattern of the second plurality of ribs of the second belt.

151. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 150, wherein the first plurality of ribs comprise wavy ribs transverse to a longitudinal direction of the second belt.

152. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 151, wherein the second plurality of ribs comprise straight ribs transverse to a longitudinal direction of the second belt.

153. (Previously Presented) The contact toaster for bread products of claim 152, wherein the second belt is configured to help retain heat in food products and warm them to serving temperature.